

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 IO-14 NEA-14 SS-20 SP-03 SAM-01

NSC-07 DODE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 DRC-01 RSC-01 /099 W

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R 221934Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1005

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 3608

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN, UN

SUBJ: PANAMA CONTINGENT IN UNEF IN MIDDLE EAST

1. ON MY JUST COMPLETED VISIT TO PROVINCES WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS, LEADER OF PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT EXPRESSED HIS DEEP CONCERN ABOUT COST OF STATIONING HIS FORCES IN MIDDLE EAST. HE SAID PANAMA HAD RECEIVED NO REPEAT NO PAYMENT FROM UNITED NATIONS UNDER FIRM OBLIGATIONS. HE SAID THAT TRAINING AND ASSIGNING THESE FORCES HAD COST PANAMA SEVERAL MILLION DOLLARS. HE ASKED THAT WE URGENTLY SEEK SOME AMELIORATION OF HIS BURDEN.

2. TORRIJOS MADE CLEAR THAT HE WAS HAPPY TO HAVE HIS FORCES AS PART OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE FORCE. HE SAID IT WAS GOOD FOR PANAMA'S PRESTIGE. IT WAS ALSO GOOD EXPERIENCE FOR HIS NATIONAL GUARD. BUT THE FINANCIAL BURDEN WAS MORE THAN PANAMA COULD BEAR. HE RELATED THE FINANCIAL DRAIN TO THE SHARPLY INCREASED COSTS OF IMPORTED FUEL AND OTHER ESSENTIAL IMPORTS.

3. TORRIJOS MADE HIS POINTS IN MATTER-OF-FACT WAY AND POSED NO THREAT OF IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF HIS FORCES. BUT I AM CERTAIN THAT IS VERY MUCH ON HIS MIND. HE DID ASK HOW MUCH OF A PROBLEM IT WOULD CAUSE U.S. IF PANAMANIAN FORCE WERE TO WITHDRAW FROM UNEF. I SAID I WAS CERTAIN IT WOULD RAISE REAL PROBLEMS--BECAUSE WE THOUGHT IT WAS GOOD TO HAVE PANAMANIAN TROOPS THERE AND PROBLEMS OF FINDING
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REPLACEMENT FORCES FROM SOME OTHER COUNTRY WOULD BE DIFFICULT.

I HAD TO AGREE THAT FINANCIAL BURDEN FOR SMALL COUNTRY LIKE PANAMA OF MAINTAINING MILITARY FORCE THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY WAS HEAVY INDEED. I PROMISED GENERAL I WOULD SEEK URGENTLY TO FIND OUT WHAT STATUS OF PAYMENTS PROBLEMS WAS AND WHETHER PANAMA CAN GET SOME RELIEF AT EARLY DATE.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT URGENTLY NEEDS TO DO WHAT CAN BE DONE TO GET UN TO PAY ITS BILLS. I ALSO NEED SOON AS POSSIBLE ANY INFORMATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT I CAN PASS ALONG TO TORRIJOS ON THIS MATTER. IF NO RELIEF IN SIGHT, DEPARTMENT NEEDS TO CONSIDER CONSEQUENCES OF WITHDRAWAL OF PANAMANIAN FORCES FROM UNEF. I PROMISED TO GET BACK TO GENERAL ON THIS ONE IN NEAREST FUTURE. APPRECIATE DEPARTMENTS ASSISTANCE TO SECURE SOME FINANCIAL RELIEF FROM UN OR POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES.
JORDEN

NOTE BY OCT: DISSEMINATION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O - MR. TWOHIE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, PERSONNEL TRAINING, IMPORTS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, MEETINGS, VISITS, FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS, PRICE TRENDS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CollinP0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974PANAMA03608
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740164-1041
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740622/aaaaascy.tel
Line Count: 79
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 SEP 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <14 FEB 2003 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PANAMA CONTINGENT IN UNEF IN MIDDLE EAST
TAGS: PFOR, PN, US, UN, UNEF, (TORRIJOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005